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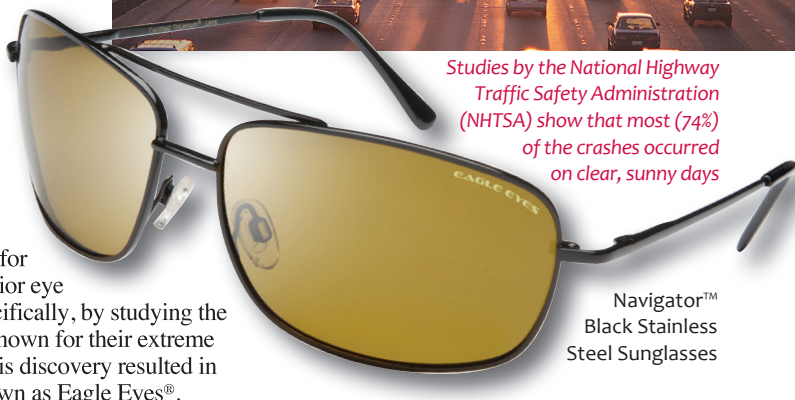

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The sun rises and sets at peak travel periods, during the early morning and afternoon rush hours and many drivers find themselves temporarily blinded while driving directly into the glare of the sun. Deadly accidents are regularly caused by such blinding glare with danger arising from reflected light off another vehicle, the pavement, or even from waxed and oily windshields that can make matters worse. Early morning dew can exacerbate this situation. Yet, motorists struggle on despite being blinded by the sun's glare that can cause countless accidents every year.

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Sometimes it does take a rocket scientist. A NASA rocket scientist. Some ordinary sunglasses can obscure your vision by exposing your eyes to harmful UV rays, blue light, and reflective glare. They can also darken useful vision-enhancing light. But now, independent research conducted by scientists from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory has brought forth ground-breaking technology to help protect human eyesight from the harmful effects of solar radiation light. This superior lens technology was first discovered when NASA scientists looked to nature for a means to superior eye protection—specifically, by studying the eyes of eagles, known for their extreme visual acuity. This discovery resulted in what is now known as Eagle Eyes®.

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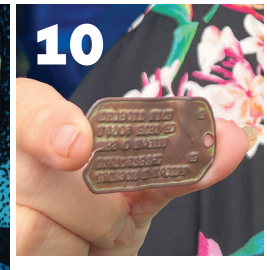

View videos, read more stories and find resources at ***legion.org.***

The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 1.6 million members. These wartime veterans, working through more than 12,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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New friends for the fight

The American Legion does not often join coalitions; we do not want to be part of a committee or group that might commit to a policy contrary to our principles and resolutions. When it comes to veteran suicide prevention, however, an exception was needed and an exception was made.

In a special email vote taken in July, the National Executive Committee passed Resolution 1, which authorizes The American Legion to join the USAA-led Face the Fight Coalition. The NEC agreed with our senior legal adviser that this move will advance our principles and resolutions rather than run contrary to one of our top priorities.

I am excited about this opportunity and believe it will enhance the Legion's Be the One initiative. One of the key strategies of Face the Fight is to identify and support veterans at risk by partnering with and investing in veteran service organizations to implement suicide prevention strategies within their organizations, teams and memberships.

By leveraging the resources, talent and expertise of corporations, VSOs, philanthropists and researchers, Face the Fight can achieve its goal of a significant reduction in the veteran suicide rate by 2030. We have lost more than 120,000 veterans to suicide since 2001. The Army and Marines both report increases in their active-duty suicides during the first quarter of 2023, compared to the same time in 2022.

While you will see much more about Face the Fight in American Legion media, you will not be seeing any less about Be the One. We will continue to Be the One to destigmatize asking for help, to reach out to our sibling veterans and raise awareness about the 988 crisis line.

The purpose of our Buddy Checks is to remind veterans that they are not alone. They have friends and allies in the American Legion Family. "Going it alone" is not a healthy way to deal with a crisis, we often tell people with suicidal ideations. It's time we follow our own advice. The Legion, with the help of our friends at USAA and other great organizations, has just received some reinforcements.

THE AMERICAN Legion MAGAZINE

Veterans Strengthening America

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Photo by Julia Cumes

'Our Gift to Ourselves'

Matt Grills did an excellent job showcasing NPS Director Chuck Sams III (July). Like Sams, I was an E-3, but in the Marine Corps, my civilian career was as a high-school social studies teacher. I even managed to teach a course on the Vietnam War. On my honeymoon, I visited as many national parks as I could over summer vacation. Upon retirement, my wife and I volunteered with the NPS one season in Rocky Mountain National Park, where we gave tours on a ranch, and three seasons at Great Smoky Mountain National Park, where we acted as docents in Cades Cove. On weekends, we were on bicycle patrol keeping people safe from bears.

Bill Ober, Huntington, N.Y.

In August 2017, my partner and I went to western Wyoming to see the total eclipse. It was spectacular. Afterwards, we went to see my stepbrother, who lives in Sheridan. Since we were close by, we went north to see the Little Bighorn Battlefield, which is a national park. The presentation was well done, but what struck me the most was the ranger who was the event interpreter. He was of the Lakota Nation and knew the oral history of what transpired from the Native American point of view. He was also a Vietnam War Army veteran, and gave speeches from both the Lakota side and the point of view of a U.S. soldier. It was very impressive.

Tom Fisher, Jamestown, Colo.

Editor's note: *The Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site is in Alabama.*

77,676

Veterans recruited by members into American Legion posts during the 2022-2023 cycle, exceeding National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola's goal of 70,000 traditional new members for the year

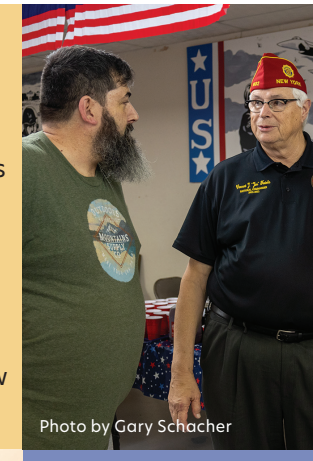
Photo by Gary Schacher

Photo by Hilary Ott

35

New American Legion-accredited service officers certified by National Headquarters in June

Photo by Zach Gibson

"Every servicemember had a battle buddy. We stood beside them in battle. We need to make sure we stand beside them today."

American Legion Past National Commander Dan Dellinger, a member of **Post 180 in Vienna, Va.** The post held a 5K run/walk July 1 to highlight the Legion's Be the One message. Approved by the Legion's National Executive Committee in May, Resolution 13 encourages posts nationwide to conduct events on the first of every month to raise awareness of veteran suicide in their communities.

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Flag Wavers

This article (July) blew me away. I consider myself a Vietnam-era and Cold War veteran. My parents were part of the greatest generation; my father served in the Army during World War II. They instilled in me a reverence for our nation that up until recently glowed intensely. My schooling helped, with a curriculum that included U.S. history and civics. While I've tried my best, I'm afraid my children do not have the fire their dad does. I think today's schools, paired with negative media, has jaundiced them. But this piece has rekindled my flame, and it is again glowing brightly. Thank you.

Tim McNeil, Taylorsville, N.C.

This era of information technology has heightened our desire to be entertained. Our heroes are celebrities, so we live in a world of fantasy. Others may see us right now as a weak, divisive nation questioning our past, but my nearly-90-year observation of our citizens when faced with natural disasters is patriotism, strength and unity. This youthful generation is as strong as any before it.

John Y. Seiling, Powell, Ohio

I would not totally despair over the waning of Americanism by some of our youth. I just attended the graduation of our Boys and Girls State programs. Earlier, I attended our district and state Oratorical contests. These young people no doubt will be the future stewards of our American exceptionalism. The way we combat indoctrination by educators is by supporting not only the programs under the Americanism pillar but all the programs of The American Legion, so that we can foster and perpetuate a true spirit of Americanism.

John A. Hook, Temple, N.H.

***THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE* WELCOMES YOUR OPINIONS**

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THE PLAYLIST

American Legion videos you don't want to miss.

Photo by Rachel Woolf

Follow American Legion youth programs
Watch video coverage of the American Legion 3-Position Junior Air Rifle Championship in Colorado Springs, Colo., American Legion Boys Nation in Arlington, Va., and the American Legion Baseball World Series in Shelby, N.C.

PTSD relief in action
Army veteran Shantane Gaines (cover) talks about how she was helped by the innovative Reconciliation of Traumatic Memories therapy, as reported in "Mind Shift" (page 16).

Visit **legion.org/magazine/videos** or subscribe to The American Legion's YouTube channel to see, show and share other American Legion videos.

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Donation from American Legion Post 273 in Madeira Beach, Fla., in June to the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System's Fisher House, in addition to over $10,000 donated last December to help families with lodging when a loved one is receiving care at the facility

Fisher House

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Whereas ...

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) must receive an application for a non-service-connected burial allowance no later than two years after burial of the veteran ...

If VA notifies claimants that their applications are incomplete, they have one year to resubmit them ...

Claimants have two years to submit such an application from the date of a discharge correction that satisfies eligibility requirements for a burial allowance ...

Many applications are denied because they are submitted after time limits have expired ...

There is currently no time limit to file a claim for a burial, plot or interment allowance associated with a veteran's service-connected death ...

The two-year limit applies only to the non-service-connected burial allowance, not the plot or internment allowance ...

The American Legion believes VA benefits should be applied equitably and consistently for all veterans ...

Be it resolved ...

The American Legion urges VA to eliminate the two-year time limit for the submission of applications for non-service-connected burial allowances.

Passed, American Legion National Executive Committee, May 10-11, 2023

Photo by Jeff Stoffer

"I am a veteran myself. I have my dog tag. I knew how important it would be for it to come back to the family in America. We veterans ... our dog tags are very special to us."

American Legion Department of France Vice Commander Valerie Prehoda, a retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel, after presenting the dog tag of World War II Army Air Force Sgt. Jackson McGill to Karen (McGill) Young, his eldest daughter, in a ceremony June 19 at Maplewood Cemetery in Anderson, Ind. The dog tag had been found by a gardener in northern France about 30 years earlier. The gardener had carried it in his wallet since then, in the hope that he would find an American who could return it to the sergeant's family. About 100 people, including state officials and media representatives, attended the repatriation of McGill's dog tag near his grave at the cemetery.

Special Legion podcast series covers MST

AMERICAN LEGION TANGO ALPHA LIMA PODCAST

The American Legion Tango Alpha Lima podcast is publishing a special six-part series, Military Sexual Trauma: Triumph in Tragedy, in September.

MST is prevalent throughout the service branches, affecting women - and men, too.

National Guard veteran and American Legion member Ashley Gorbulja, an original Tango Alpha Lima co-host, returns to host this special series that aims to raise awareness about MST, share stories of overcoming the trauma and pinpoint resources.

Among the highlights:

- An overview of MST, new research and resources
- How service branches and DoD are working to address MST
- Men share their experiences and how they found hope
- Members of the LGBTQ+ community discuss the prevalence of MST
- An accredited American Legion service officer and VA representative talk about options available to those seeking assistance

The first three episodes will be released Sept. 5-7, and the final three Sept. 12-14. Tango Alpha Lima subscribers will receive the episodes in their regular feed, or you can find them at **legion.org/tangoalphalima**, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and other major podcast players.

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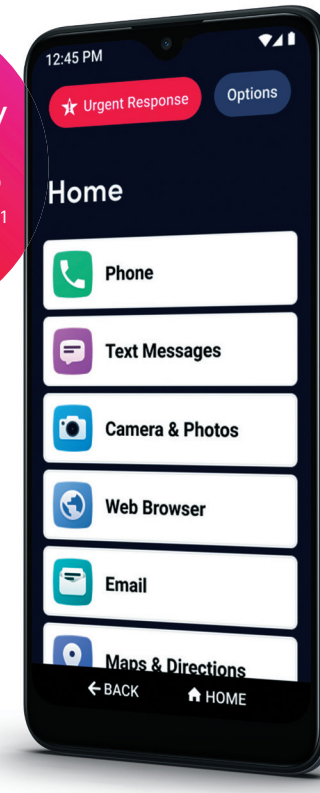

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HEALTH & FITNESS BY JENNIFER CAMPBELL

How exercise affects mental health

The American Legion's Be the One initiative is a year-round effort to reduce the rate of veteran suicide. With September being Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, this is an ideal time to remind our loved ones and ourselves about the importance of using physical activity to stay mentally healthy.

Exercise has many mental health benefits, including a reduced risk of depression and anxiety, improved brain and cognitive function, better quality of sleep and overall quality of life. Many veterans have found fitness activities a way to better cope with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries and other service-connected conditions.

It's not just veterans, servicemembers or first responders suffering from traumatic events, however. There is a mental health epidemic in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that in the decade preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, feelings of persistent sadness and hopelessness, as well as suicidal thoughts and behaviors, increased by approximately 40% among young people. Research also shows that comorbid physical and mental health problems continue into adulthood.

A recent study in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that teens with physical and mental health disorders are more likely to have very low quality of life as adults. Mental illness may also have a direct or indirect effect on physical health. For instance, mental disorders, such as depression, may directly lead to physical illness by weakening or altering the immune response. There is also evidence suggesting that stress can lead to decreased immune function.

The CDC recommends 150 minutes per week of moderately intense physical activity. That may sound daunting, but if you break it up into five days of 30 minutes of activity, it's quite manageable.

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Don't think of physical fitness as hard-core running or intense weightlifting. Choose 30 minutes of activity that meets your current fitness level. That might be brisk walking, light jogging, swimming, biking, using an elliptical, yoga or similar exercises.

Join a community as a way to stay motivated and have fun. Try a recreational sport like pickleball, volleyball, tennis, golf or bowling. Making exercise a social activity can be very beneficial for mental health outcomes, and doing it outside is a real mood booster.

Engage family members, perhaps even a younger person who may be showing signs of depression or anxiety. A walk, bike ride or canoe trip are all great ways to reconnect via a shared experience while also getting in some physical fitness.

Keep showing up. It may be challenging at first. But once you rebuild a base level of fitness, you will begin to enjoy your chosen activity more, improve physically and boost your mental wellness.

Army veteran Jennifer Campbell is a certified personal trainer with a master's degree in nutrition education. She is past commander of the California American Legion's 24th District and Hollywood Post 43.

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

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On your FEET

VA works to prevent unnecessary amputations.

BY SUZANNE SHIRLEY

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Of the 200,000 amputations performed in the United States each year, 85% are avoidable. That's 170,000 people each year who lose a limb – often a foot – unnecessarily.

Diabetic foot ulcers (DFUs) can be devastating complications for those with diabetes, one of the nation's most common diseases and one that affects 25% of veterans. By the time DFUs present themselves, they can be difficult to heal, and the risk of a secondary ulcer is high. Sometimes the only path forward is amputation. Across private and public health systems, amputation is associated with a five-year mortality rate of 70% and is also associated with socioeconomic and racial inequities. Caught early, however, DFUs can often be prevented, eliminating the need for amputation.

With more than 2 million veterans with diabetes under its care, VA is leading the fight to eliminate diabetic amputations. In 2019, VHA Innovation Ecosystem (VHAIE) – an arm of VA tasked with identifying and scaling innovation – launched the Initiative to End Diabetic Limb Loss in collaboration with VA's Prevention of Amputation programs. Recognizing the importance of early detection in preventive care, VHAIE collaborated with Podimetrics, a private company, to offer high-risk veteran patients a SmartMat, a simple gray mat that uses temperature monitoring to identify foot ulcers before they become problematic.

The device is noninvasive. A veteran stands on the mat for 20 seconds a day, and their foot temperature scans are remotely monitored for any changes that might need attention. The VA clinical team is notified of temperature spikes that indicate early signs of infection. The device has been proven effective, spotting DFUs five to six weeks earlier than they would otherwise present.

Since scaling up the use of remote temperature monitoring, VA has seen 97% of diabetic foot ulcers caught early and the near-elimination of major amputations among those using the system. Today this system is available at VA centers nationwide with more than 10,000 patients enrolled. VA is committed to empowering veterans and clinicians in working together as a team to preserve health and well-being.

Every veteran who meets the clinical need can access remote temperature monitoring. VHAIE is constantly testing and scaling novel care models, as part of VA's mission to continuously improve its ability to preserve health, build trust and restore hope among veterans. Those interested in learning more should reach out to their VA primary care or podiatry teams.

Suzanne Shirley is director of community engagement and fellowship at the Veterans Health Administration Innovation Ecosystem.

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From left, Mike Suter, Dr. Frank Bourke, Bob Salluzzo and retired Air Force Brig. Gen. Jon Adams have advanced RTM therapy as a successful, cost-effective treatment for PTSD.
Photo by Mike Bradley

MIND SHIFT

Innovative PTSD therapy has a 90% success rate for veterans, first responders and others grappling with traumatic experiences.

BY HENRY HOWARD

Mike Suter calmly recalls every detail of the Beirut bombing that killed 241 U.S. troops 40 years ago this October.

"I got blown out of my bed in an adjacent building, 20 to 30 feet away from the barracks," says Suter, a retired Marine Corps major and member of Herman Kent American Legion Post 777 in Celoron, N.Y. "After I got myself together, I walked out and saw the airport. I couldn't see the airport before because the building was blocking it. Four Marines ran up the road, covered in blood, yelling, 'They're all dead.'"

Over the next 60 sleepless hours, Suter and others engaged in a firefight, set up a morgue and searched the rubble for signs of life.

The trauma stayed with Suter for decades. So did the sleepless nights, as the memories regularly limited him to three hours. He was unable to talk about the bombing, and he had trouble socializing. Prescription drugs couldn't give him the rest and relief he needed.

About five years ago, Suter decided to try a therapy called Reconciliation of Traumatic Memories (RTM), applied to help veterans, first responders, disaster victims and others cope with their trauma.

After his first RTM session, Suter slept eight hours and maintains that average today. "I have a moment now and then, but after talking about it, things mellow out," he says. "I remember

everything that happened in Beirut that day. Now the triggers don't exist; they are just a memory."

Help for 9/11 survivors Frank Bourke is a clinical psychologist and former lecturer at Cornell University in upstate New York. He and his colleagues developed RTM, an 89-step process that has a 90% success rate without use of drugs or medication. It transforms trauma victims from not being able to handle associated memories to a disassociated state where they can talk about the trauma without issue. While the memories themselves won't change, RTM alters the way in which the person sees and reacts to them.

Months after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Bourke was among dozens of psychologists working with hundreds of survivors with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Often, they would cower under their desks or even benches at a subway station, imagining themselves experiencing the terror all over again. After Bourke worked with the individual, their behavior returned to normal.

"I would do the protocol for two to five hours and they would come into work the next day as their old selves, which was not believable in terms of its efficacy," Bourke says. "It quickly became apparent that it was like nothing else. It was getting rid of the nightmares and flashbacks."

Bourke's experience at Ground Zero not only helped survivors return to their careers but has led to similar successes for veterans, first responders and others suffering from trauma-induced PTSD. He derived the RTM Protocol from a neuro-linguistic protocol that may have been originally developed by American psychiatrist and psychologist Milton Erickson.

"The protocol has gone from an initial thing that I picked up to a very refined version of it that has also been cleaned up so it can be researched," Bourke explains.

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How the therapy works

A therapist certified in RTM Protocol™ works one-on-one with a PTSD-diagnosed patient. Generally, it takes three sessions, from 60 to 90 minutes each. After successfully completing the sessions, the patient can recall the once-triggering memory without experiencing traumatic feelings. The process has 89 steps, but this is an outline of how it works:

1. In a typical therapy office, the therapist directs the client to imagine a movie screen on the wall.
2. The therapist guides the client through a movie of a neutral event, using visual variations including projecting the imagined movie on the wall in black and white, running it backward very fast, and from both associated and dissociated views.
3. After the client has mastered all the visual variations using the neutral scene, they move on to the next phase. It begins by imagining themselves in a movie theater, feeling the seat, smelling the popcorn, using all senses.
4. The therapist guides the client to recall and watch movies of their real traumatic events using the learned visual variations, from a dissociated view. This is achieved as the client imagines themselves floating up to the projection booth. From there, they are not watching the movie; they are watching themselves watch the movie.
5. The steps might be run and reconfigured as needed, in part or in full, numerous times. Success is achieved on the final step, when the client imagines the event without traumatic elements.
6. Throughout the sessions, the therapist verifies each step with Subjective Units of Distress measurements. This allows for an organized flow throughout the protocol and to ensure success.

To learn more or see if you or a loved one qualifies for the therapy, visit ***thertmprotocol.com.***

"The reason it works is because it is not normal therapy. It's a neurological intervention."

Bourke is now the chief executive officer of the Research and Recognition Project, a nonprofit founded to advance RTM therapy.

"The RTM Protocol, at this point, is the most cost-effective treatment for PTSD in the world," he says. "That is being borne out by the scientific research."

The RTM Protocol was evaluated in four separate randomized controlled trials between 2015 and 2020. An independent analysis of the research, published in 2022, supported the findings of a 90% success rate: "The RTM Protocol has now been shown to successfully treat PTSD in both military and civilian contexts. It has surpassed the efficacy of mainline treatments in the permanent resolution of PTSD and its symptoms."

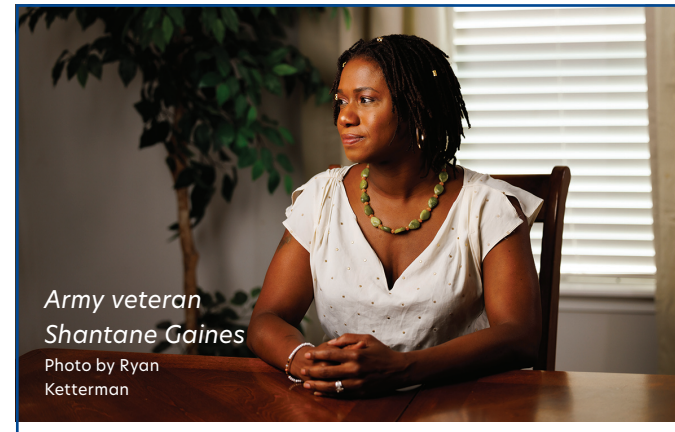
It can alleviate issues stemming from recent traumas and others dating back decades.

Bourke has treated Vietnam War veterans whose nightmares span 50 years. "They have every blade of grass on the path they were walking on visualized from the ambush they encountered."

The process is designed so those with PTSD can reset their response to the traumatic memory. "Unconsciously, neurologically, the memory is separated from the physiological response, the flight-or-fight response."

In Bourke's experience, he doesn't see a difference in the success between a one-time traumatic event like an accident and one that takes place over months or years, such as abuse. For example, 36 women in San Diego were treated for military sexual trauma. A follow-up study one year later showed 96% were cured.

"If there is a traumatic memory, whatever produced it, the therapy will work on it. Anecdotally, we know it works long-term. Scientifically, we haven't measured out more than a year."



Army veteran Shantane Gaines
Photo by Ryan Ketterman

'From tears of sadness to tears of joy'

Army veteran Shantane Gaines may have been in the vehicle's driver's seat, but her traumatic memories were in control. Behind the wheel, her whole body tensed up.

"My triggers were horrible," she says. "There were multiple times when I would cry, and I lost control. It was scary. The hairs on my body would stand up. I just wanted relief."

Gaines, who served as a supply specialist from 2000 to 2004, was able to reset herself after about 30 minutes. But with a family counting on her, she knew she needed assistance to overcome her trauma stemming from a serious car accident.

She took the RTM test and qualified for the treatment. "I was tired of feeling that way," she says. "I was willing to try anything. But I did not believe it would work."

After the first session last spring, Gaines returned to her home outside Jacksonville, Fla., and practiced the visioning technique she learned. Several sessions later, she was at last able to talk about the trauma without breaking down. "I took the emotion out of the event. Instead of me feeling it, experiencing it, the therapy did something to my brain. After that therapy, I had no response. I went from tears of sadness to tears of joy. It changed my life."

Gaines has a 21-year-old, 16-year-old and twin 12-year-olds. They saw their mother at every stage of her journey: before the trauma, dealing with the effects of the trauma and, finally, overcoming it.

"I'm not on autopilot anymore. I can control myself. Those triggers don't affect me anymore. I express myself to my kids way better. I apologize to my kids way better. I don't want them to ever wonder what's wrong with Mommy."

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American Legion support While Bourke was focusing on survivors of current events like 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, Bob Salluzzo envisioned the therapy as a way to help veterans.

"Bob essentially recognized that there was a whole generation of Vietnam War veterans who were carrying these traumas and weren't getting treated properly," Bourke says. "Drugs and other therapy didn't work. They all had friends and relatives who were living very disjointed lives because of their PTSD."

Salluzzo, a Vietnam-era Army veteran and member of Robert Lee Walsh American Legion Post 377 in Broadalbin, N.Y., spearheaded the Department of New York's support for RTM. The department has donated more than $125,000 to fund Bourke's work and nonprofit. Other contributions include American Legion Post 472 of Johnstown donating its last $15,000 to the then-fledgling program to keep it afloat.

In 2021, the Legion's National Executive Committee approved Resolution 25, calling for Congress to provide oversight and funding to VA, DoD and the Research and Recognition Project for research and training of RTM. Funding is critical for training counselors on the therapy, so that more trauma sufferers can find the relief they need.

Salluzzo is pushing for a broader effort. "The sheer number of (American Legion) posts across the country means we have the visibility and the entry point to take this treatment into all the

A life-changing five hours

Vietnam was worse than hell for Mike Moreno.

Hell's Kitchen, that is.

"It's a pretty tough neighborhood, and you learn to fight at a very young age," recalls the native New Yorker, who served in the Army's 101st Airborne as a rifleman. "But after a fight, you shook hands with your opponent and the matter was over. It was nothing like what I experienced in Vietnam."

There, Moreno slept in jungles, endured monsoons and was on constant watch for hidden enemies.

"I say, 'I'm a combat infantryman' instead of, 'I was a combat infantryman,' because once you have seen combat, the memories – especially the bad ones, the firefights, the ambushes, the mortar attacks – they stay with you forever," he says. "After I was discharged from the Army, I started having nightmares and flashbacks. In these dreams, there always was somebody trying to kill me."

He withdrew from friends and family, lost trust in everyone and wouldn't talk about his time in

RTM therapy helped Mike Moreno face traumatic combat memories and heal relationships with family.
Photo courtesy Mike Moreno

country. Twenty years passed before Moreno understood his issues were related to post-traumatic stress disorder. He needed even longer to find a solution after trying cognitive therapy, medications and other methods.

"After almost 55 years, I found a therapy that eliminated the demons I lived with all these years," he says.

Three Reconciliation of Traumatic Memories (RTM) sessions totaling five hours changed Moreno's life.

"I could talk about this specific event without anxiety," he explains. "The most astonishing thing is that other combat events I experienced have also gone to zero. I can't explain how this happened in five hours. That heavy burden I lived with for so many years is gone."

Moreno has also mended relationships with his children and grandchildren.

"Because of PTSD, I never let anything out about my emotions or feelings," he says. "Now, I'm a lot more open. I listen more. I joke more. I ask more questions. I don't just push my way."

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communities," he says. "It's a rare opportunity because the stated objective of The American Legion's Be the One initiative is to cut down the number of veteran suicides. We can filter the treatment to the families and communities where every Legion post is."

Be the One is currently the Legion's preeminent initiative, aiming to reduce veteran suicide by helping destigmatize mental health care. Bourke emphasizes the value of the program.

"'Be the One' to get those people this treatment that really works, even after 50 years of suffering. The American Legion has found something that really addresses PTSD .... We wouldn't have completed the initial research or be using this today without The American Legion's contribution."

Going with the winner Marine Corps and Navy veteran Montel Williams serves on the Research and Recognition Project board of directors. He has advocated for RTM, sent veterans to participate in the therapy and spoken about its success in public forums.

"I've really never taken my uniform off," says Williams, who

"I would do the protocol for two to five hours, and they would come into work the next day as their old selves, which was not believable in terms of its efficacy.... It quickly became apparent that it was like nothing else. It was getting rid of the nightmares and flashbacks."

Army veteran Jerrold Oser
Photo courtesy Jerrold Oser

No more aftershocks

Army veteran Jerrold Oser was stationed at Fort Richardson, Alaska, when the second-largest earthquake on record struck on Good Friday, March 27, 1964. Measuring 9.2 on the Richter scale, the quake and resulting tsunamis killed more than 130 people.

Oser was among the U.S. military personnel who searched for survivors. At one point, they found a boy on the roof of his home. He refused their pleas to jump down, saying he had to go inside and get a sibling.

"I wanted to jump on the roof but was told no," says Oser, a member of American Legion Post 1573 in Harriman, N.Y. "There was another aftershock, and the whole house gave way and went down with the boys in it. It was hard for me to accept that they died."

The memory stayed with Oser for decades.

"I had nightmares (and would wake) up swinging or reaching for something," he says, explaining that he was lunging for the boy.

He saw psychiatrists and psychologists but refused to take medication for his PTSD. Instead, he buried his struggle in long work hours and alcohol binges.

"All of a sudden a wall would drop and I wouldn't let people in," he says. "After going through the (RTM) process with Dr. (Frank) Bourke, I was able to drop the wall – not completely, but to where I could function better. I was able to talk about it. I'm able to hug my grandchildren now."

Oser is applying what he learned from the therapy as he battles lung cancer. "Before I met Dr. Bourke, I was suicidal," he says. "Dr. Bourke taught me how to build a foundation to get through any problem. Once you build that foundation, you can live with it."

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Dr. Frank Bourke talks about his RTM therapy, which has been applied to help veterans and others deal with their trauma. Photo by Mike Bradley

retired in 1996 as a lieutenant commander in the Navy Reserve before his second career as a popular TV talk show host. "I'm interested in supporting veterans' issues for those who do so much for us. When you look at the studies that show nine out of 10 veterans successfully walk away from RTM, I have to go with the winner."

Williams points out a dilemma. "We're in a Catch-22," he says. "A lot of our veterans who suffer from PTSD get a check from VA for that impairment. If they go back to VA and say 'I'm cured,' a large chunk of their VA benefits will disappear. But I tell them that if they are sick of being sick, tired and hurting, there is something that can stop the hurting today. You can be done. Just think about how much more of a productive life you will have after you get rid of the symptoms of PTSD .... you will gain yourself back.

"This is not a pipe dream. It's real."

What's next RTM has a footprint in New York, California and New Mexico. Bourke's team also supports Ukrainians affected by the Russian invasion. Sixty counselors there are already trained, with 200 more on a wait list.

Together, Bourke, Salluzzo, Suter and others have a goal to expand RTM. Given the protocol's success rate, they want to train more therapists to help more people. Bourke says it takes three days to train a therapist.

Suter wants others to experience the life-changing treatment, too. Before he underwent RTM, he would stay in his dark basement "bunker" alone for 10 hours a day. He was able to talk with fellow Legion members and even give reports to audiences numbering in the thousands. But certain situations brought the trauma back to the surface; restaurants, grocery stores and other public places were triggers.

"Now, I don't have a bunker," he says. "It's a storage room. I think how great my life is now. I'm a human being. I breathe. I can smell. I can talk to anybody. This protocol is real. It works."

Henry Howard is deputy director of media and communications for The American Legion.

For Be the One information, resources and more, visit **betheone.org**.

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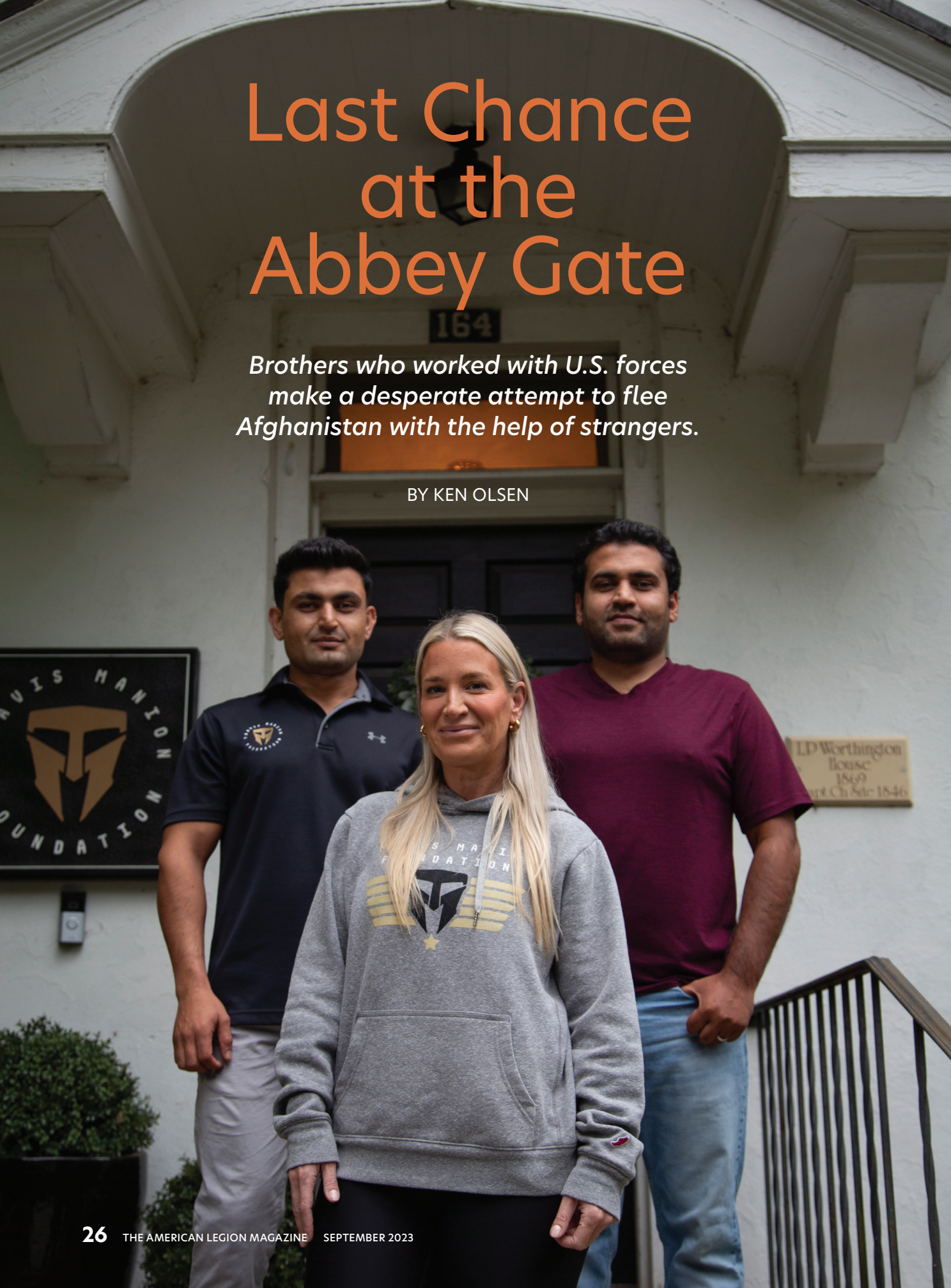
Last Chance at the Abbey Gate

Brothers who worked with U.S. forces make a desperate attempt to flee Afghanistan with the help of strangers.

BY KEN OLSEN



Basharmal Paiwand knew he had to abandon his attempt to get out of Afghanistan with his wife, son and younger brother. The intense heat and suffocating crowds clamoring to get into the Kabul airport were making his 3-year-old son sick. He couldn't imagine a U.S military contact he'd never spoken to – much less met – would find them among the thousands desperate to flee after their country fell to the Taliban. And his brother might well be turned away because he wasn't part of the last-minute evacuation plan.

Paiwand texted a photo of his suffering son to Ryan Manion, a Pennsylvania woman who was helping arrange their escape from thousands of miles away. Then he sent her a text saying they were giving up if her contact didn't find them in the next five minutes. A flurry of messages followed. Manion texted Air Force Maj. Jared Lefaivre, who was helping Afghan translators and other allies get into the airport. She then sent a series of texts to Paiwand, first telling him to hold the sign with a prearranged code word higher as he tried to move his family to the front of the crowd. Then to shout the name of her late brother, Travis, a Marine killed by a sniper in Iraq. And finally to show Travis' photo to Marines near the Abbey Gate in hopes that one of them would recognize her brother, realize Paiwand and his family were trustworthy, and pull them to safety.

In the midst of this chaos, Paiwand told Manion that his brother, Mohammad Bawar, was also with them. "At that point, I hadn't slept for 36 hours," Manion says. "I told him, 'If your brother doesn't get through, you have to keep going. We'll figure something out for him later.'"

Then, all communications from Afghanistan went dark.

Ryan Manion, center, founder of the Travis Manion Foundation, helped Mohammad Bawar, left, and Basharmal Paiwand, right, escape Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover in August 2021 and resettle near Doylestown, Pa. Manion then connected the brothers with Operation Afghan Open Road to help them train to become truck drivers. Photo by Denise L. Henhoeffer

Discarded allies When Kabul fell, Paiwand and Bawar were mired in the complicated process of obtaining Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs), meant to make it easier for Afghans and Iraqis who worked with the U.S. military to come to the United States. Their family had long worked with the Army, starting with their eldest brother in 2007. As his business supplying construction materials and heavy equipment to U.S. bases all over Afghanistan grew, he used his success to help his parents, siblings and a large number of Afghans in need. "He never said no to anyone," Bawar says.

Their brother – who is not being identified to protect his family – was arrested by the Taliban twice and received monthly letters or phone calls warning him to stop working with American forces. He refused, Paiwand says. "He said, 'It's my country and my business.'"

A Taliban sniper killed him in March 2013 as he was sitting in his car in Kabul. But his family was undeterred. Paiwand provided equipment to U.S. Army bases and Bawar worked for him as a supervisor, translator and troubleshooter. Five other brothers and their father also continued working with U.S. forces.

Paiwand started the SIV application process in 2017. He obtained a recommendation letter from his former Army supervisor but couldn't persuade him to also provide his passport number – which Paiwand needed to complete his application. Three years later, he reached out to Manion after reading her Facebook post about her brother writing a letter on behalf of his Iraqi translator just a week before he was killed, and asked her for help with his SIV.

"I get a lot of random messages on Facebook and Instagram," says Manion, who established the Travis Manion Foundation after her brother was killed. "This one really struck me because he had worked with the U.S. Army .... He saw and understood that kinship and brotherhood that my brother had with (his translator)." Paiwand and Manion also bonded over their mutual loss of brothers to war. And Manion agreed to try to help Paiwand contact his former Army supervisor.

Although she was unsuccessful, Manion and

Lafaivre estimates he helped some 500 Afghans get into the airport and onto flights after the fall of Kabul. "There were a million things that had to go right for every one of the rescues," he says.

Paiwand kept in touch, and she sent him a message when the Taliban rolled into Kabul on Aug. 15, 2021. "Did you get out of Afghanistan?" Manion asked. "No, ma'am," Paiwand replied. "I'm in hell."

"I felt helpless, but I sprang into action," Manion says. She told a skeptical Paiwand she knew people who could help get him, his wife, Layla, and his son, Atal, out of the country. She posted a message on social media asking if anyone had a contact at the Abbey Gate and got connected with Lefaivre.

An Air Force rescue pilot, Lefaivre says he got "mixed up in all of this by happenstance." He was deployed to Kabul in mid-July 2021 as part of a Personnel Recovery Task Force. After the country collapsed in August, a friend from the Marine Corps contacted Lefaivre and asked for help getting his interpreter and family into the airport and on a flight out of the country. Lefaivre helped make that happen within a few days, then agreed to let his friend share his contact information with others trying to help Afghans escape. "My phone blew up," he says. Manion was one of the next people to contact him.

Lefaivre told Manion that Paiwand and his family should be at the Abbey Gate by dawn the next day with a sign that said "Spurgeon." That code was part of a system that helped him and his colleagues quickly find Afghans who worked with U.S. forces among the desperate crowds outside the airport. Paiwand and his wife, son and brother headed to the airport around 1 a.m. They were stopped at a Taliban checkpoint on the main road to the airport. "The guy was smiling at us like we were running and afraid of them," Paiwand says, "and asked if we were going to America or Germany? I said, 'Nope, Pakistan.' And he became angry and said, 'I will never let you go on this road.' But we found another road that led straight to the Abbey Gate."

Finding "Spurgeon" By morning, more than 10,000 refugees crowded between Paiwand's family and the Abbey Gate. The temperature had hit the mid-90s and there was the persistent percussion of the Taliban gunfire just beyond the purview of U.S. forces. People were passing out in the relentless heat that was also affecting Paiwand's son. Feeling they had no choice but to return to the family home in Kabul, Paiwand texted Manion a photo of Atal and told her they were leaving in five minutes.

Lefaivre soon appeared. Despite the chaos and confusion, he had little trouble spotting the people with the "Spurgeon" sign when he went looking for them outside the Abbey Gate.

"I found them tucked away in a corner, being held by some British guys," he says. He told the British contingent he had come to escort Paiwand and his family into the airport. The British resisted, warning such a move would start a riot, Lefaivre says. He pulled them out of the crowd anyway, took them across a canal and through the Abbey Gate as the British closed ranks behind them – all without incident. Then he texted Manion the good news.

After two grueling days in the Kabul air terminal, standing in line for 12 to 14 hours at a stretch, sleeping on cardboard and worrying about Atal's refusal to eat, the family crammed into a plane with hundreds of other refugees and flew to Qatar. Then the family went on to Italy before arriving at Camp Atterbury in Indiana.

Manion sent them food and clothing and lobbied the relief agencies to move them to Pennsylvania, where she could help them get established. She picked Paiwand and his family up at the Philadelphia airport in early November, got them settled in their hotel, took them grocery shopping and made dinner plans for the following evening. The family spent every day at Manion's house for several months. And the Travis Manion Foundation hired Paiwand and Bawar to help Afghan refugees resettle in the Philadelphia area. Although their contract with the foundation ended in April, the brothers continue this work as volunteers.

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"There are a lot of families who need a lot of help because they have a lot of children," says Bawar, who sees this work as a way of honoring his slain brother.

Uncertain future Meanwhile, Manion's husband, David Borek, asked Task Force Movement – organized in response to a White House initiative to get the supply chain moving – to offer the same truck-driver training to Afghan refugees as it was providing to veterans. The Justamere Foundation funded 32 scholarships as part of what became the Operation Afghan Open Road pilot project.

Paiwand completed the truck-driver training with the first Afghan cohort at Bucks County Community College and is considering his employment options. Mohammad served as translator and troubleshooter for other Afghan students, helping them get their CDL learners permit, obtain visas and navigate language barriers. But he's set his sights on putting his bachelor's degree in IT to work in the tech world rather than becoming a truck driver while he waits for his SIV application to be approved.

Atal is in school. And thanks to Manion's connections, Layla found work as a seamstress in an upscale clothing store. She's enrolling in a dental assistant training program at Bucks County with a scholarship funded by Justamere.

These successes are bittersweet. Three dozen of the brothers' family members and several of their former employees remain trapped in Afghanistan. Many of them have had their SIV applications approved, but cannot obtain passports from the Taliban government. They are in hiding, unable to work and dependent on whatever money Paiwand and Bawar can send for food and essentials. It's a common problem. Many Afghan refugees are financially supporting family left behind while trying to get established in the United States – to say nothing of another 100,000 SIV applicants and their families who haven't been able to get out of Afghanistan.

Manion, meanwhile, is quite concerned about the lack of support for Afghans who made it to the United States. One of the overwhelmed relief agencies that promised to furnish Paiwand's rental showed up with "a dirty mattress and very little of what a family needs to get started," Manion says. "Two of the chairs broke the first night." Another woman, whose husband was killed by the Taliban, is living in a row house in a bad part of town. "They gave her a food stamp card and let her go," Manion says. "Who's focused on what comes next?"

Reunion Despite all the challenges they are still navigating, Paiwind and Bawar are grateful to Manion and Lefaivre, two strangers who stepped up to help them escape Afghanistan and almost-certain Taliban retribution. They reconnected with Lefaivre when he and his wife visited Philadelphia in December 2021. "It was a very emotional and meaningful experience for us," Paiwand says. "I didn't find the words to thank him for helping us."

Paiwand and Bawar are just two of many Afghans who Lefaivre and his colleagues helped get through the Abbey Gate with code words and cardboard signs. He fielded requests from members of Congress and at least one former ambassador over the course of a dozen days. Lafaivre estimates he helped some 500 Afghans get into the airport and onto flights after the fall of Kabul. He received the Bronze Star for meritorious achievement for this and other actions during the withdrawal. And the task force he served with was credited with helping 10,000 Afghans escape and has been nominated for a Gallant Unit Citation. Their success, and the U.S. military's overall success at getting more than 120,000 Afghan allies out of the country in a matter of days, is an underappreciated accomplishment that runs counter to the social narrative that the U.S. withdrawal was a complete failure, Lefaivre says.

"There were a million things that had to go right for every one of the rescues," Lefaivre says. He credits Manion for making sure so much of it went right for Paiwand, Layla, Atal and Bawar.

Manion disagrees. "I did nothing," she says. "He put his career on the line. I asked him why. He said, 'It's humanity. I couldn't stand there and not help.'"

Ken Olsen is a frequent contributor to The American Legion Magazine.

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Hamid Samar is a graduate of Operation Afghan Open Road, a pilot program through Task Force Movement that helps Afghan refugees obtain commercial truck driver's licenses.
Photo by Denise L. Henhoeffer

Road to a New Start

Afghan allies who aided U.S. forces sign up for CDL classes amid difficulty finding living-wage jobs.

BY KEN OLSEN

A man walked into a Philadelphia fast-food restaurant just before closing time last November and demanded Hamid Samar hand over the contents of his cash register.

"His face was covered, and I couldn't understand him," Samar says. "Then I could see he was taking out his gun. And I thought I should escape."

Samar told the robber to "cool down" while he went to get the cash-register key, then ran out the back door with eight other restaurant staff, including a fellow Afghan refugee. The robber vaulted over the counter, failed in his attempts to open the register and left empty-handed.

"This situation shocked me and shocked my family," says Samar, who worked as a translator for U.S. and coalition forces for 17 years. His experience is emblematic of the employment challenges facing Afghans who came to the United States to escape Taliban retribution for their work with the forces. People with advanced degrees and impressive résumés are rebuffed when they try to turn their education and experience into living-wage jobs.

Samar, a successful media entrepreneur who launched the first women's TV station in

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Afghanistan in addition to working with the U.S. military, manages the fast-food restaurant. And Zawar Shar Jaweed, an economics graduate who worked as a program management specialist for the United Nations, the U.S. Embassy and Afghanistan's National Statistics and Information Authority, has supported his family here and in Afghanistan by working as an Uber driver and a second-shift site manager in a meat-processing plant.

At the end of the day, their prior work history just doesn't count. "I have applied everywhere," says Nazeer Akbari. "But they say, 'We can't hire you because you don't have experience in the United States.'" This despite Akbari's master's degree in sociology and experience as an interpreter with the U.S. Army, at NATO's headquarters in Afghanistan, and with USAID and other organizations. It's also been difficult because Akbari and his family were not prepared to leave Afghanistan when the Taliban suddenly took over Kabul. "We are unable to withdraw money we had in the bank. We just left everything and came here."

Now, with the help of an American Legion-backed pilot program called Operation Afghan Open Road, Akbari, Jaweed and Samar are training to become truck drivers with the prospect of better pay and health-care benefits than their current jobs. "My family depends on me for support," says Akbari, whose household includes his wife, three children and his mother. "That's why I chose truck-driver training, so I can find a job with better pay. So my children can have a better life here."

National need Operation Afghan Open Road is part of Task Force Movement (TFM), established in support of a White House initiative to provide truck-driver training to veterans and ease supply-chain transportation problems. It builds on 20 years of effort by The American Legion to help veterans transition to civilian jobs with training and credentialing programs that often complement skills they developed in the military.

It's important to extend the opportunity to Afghans who assisted U.S. and coalition forces, says Jay Bowen, chairman of The American Legion's Veterans Employment & Education Commission. "These men and women risked their lives and put their families at risk to help us," Bowen says. "They saved so many lives. This is just a small way to repay them for their service to our country."

It also helps the United States address an ongoing trucker shortage, says Bowen, who was responsible for shipping and receiving during his years working in food processing. "I learned the turnover rate in the trucking industry is 125%," he says. "That affects the supply chain in any industry. We've got to continue to ensure we have quality truckers out on the road to deliver raw materials and finished products."

Operation Afghan Open Road began after David Borek asked TFM to offer the same truck-driver training to Afghan refugees that was being offered to veterans. His wife, Ryan Manion – founder of the Travis Manion Foundation, named for her late brother – helped brothers Basharmal Paiwand and Mohammad Bawar escape Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover in August 2021. Borek and Manion realized Afghans were struggling to find decent jobs after the brothers began working with Philadelphia's refugees on behalf of the foundation.

Task Force Movement readily agreed to help. "It seemed like a no-brainer," says Elizabeth Murray-Belcaster, senior adviser of communications and public relations. "We immediately went to our funding partner, the Justamere Foundation, and were able to put together scholarships."

The scholarships cover training costs for 32 Afghan refugees. "Our purpose is to jump-start the program – show it can work," says Lori Cushman, Justamere's president. And to repay a debt. "They were very helpful to our troops," she says. "I wanted them to be treated as if they had been fighting for us just as our soldiers were."

Afghan refugees started classes at North Montco Technical Career Center or Bucks County Community College in November. About a dozen have graduated with their commercial driver's licenses, and a new cohort began training this spring. Meanwhile, TFM is

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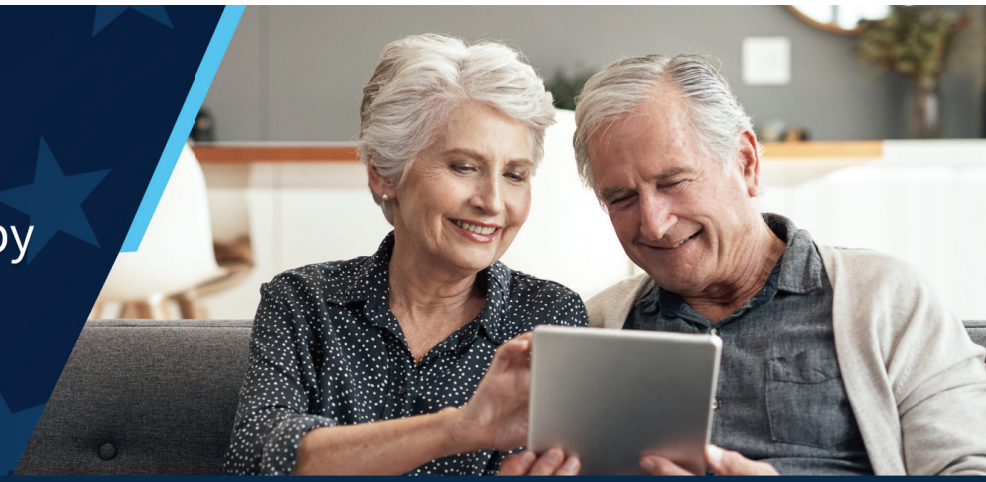

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preparing to expand the Afghan pilot program to other states, Murray-Belcaster says.

Individual training Akbari and Jaweed were part of the first Afghan contingent to enroll in the North Montco program. Located in Lansdale, about 30 miles north of Philadelphia, the technical school has provided truck-driver and commercial driver's license training for 22 years. Its students include people from all over the world, says Denise Collins, supervisor of work force and continuing education.

As to language issues, "we're fluent in figuring it out with each student," says Keri Guttmann, a North Montco instructor who is involved with TFM and Operation Afghan Open Road. In addition, five of North Montco's truck-driving instructors are veterans, including two who served with the U.S. military in Afghanistan. "We really appreciate the veterans on our team and the ways in which we have benefited from their knowledge of the Afghan culture and their ability to connect with these students," Collins says.

North Montco makes its courses available on nights and weekends to accommodate students' work schedules, which has been key for Akbari and other Afghans who can't afford to take time off. It also provides one-on-one driver training. "In our view, that makes for a safer driver," Collins says.

Training and testing takes place at a commercial freight operation owned by Lansdale Warehouse Co. This real-world setting is important. "A huge portion of the students are learning how to maneuver around other vehicles," Guttmann says. "It's very easy to get hurt in this field. It's very easy to cause an accident. I don't allow my students on the road until I know they can maneuver the truck properly."

The company is happy to host the training center. "It works out well," says president and Air Force veteran Paul Delp, who grew up in the family warehouse and trucking business and served as a C-130 loadmaster in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War.

"It's an active warehouse, with our own trucks and other commercial carriers coming in and out," Delp says. "And the parking lot is big enough for trucks to turn around easily." North Montco runs a high-caliber program, he adds. "They don't cut any corners. It gives them a good start."

Training days Jaweed is hoping he and a fellow Afghan refugee who also graduated from the North Montco program will be able to work as a long-haul driving team. He's preparing his family for his extended absences by teaching his wife to drive a car so she can shop and take their children to school and medical appointments while he is on the road. He's not sure he'll be able to return to his profession – program/project management – as he hopes. "My long-term goal is a little mixed up right now," Jaweed says. "I should go for truck driving for five or six years. If I can get a little bit set aside, I will try to go back to my career."

Samar credits the Travis Manion Foundation for helping him earn his commercial driver's license at Bucks County. He has high praise for the program and has had a few job offers, but hasn't yet found the right fit. "It's a crucial time for my family, my children and my wife," he says of his worries about being away from home for extended periods of time. But he's not giving up. "I am able to support my family more quickly with trucking," he says.

Long-term, driving trucks also will provide him the means to re-establish himself in the media and film industry.

Akbari earned his commercial driver's license in March and applied for a job at Western Express, where he is receiving additional training before heading out on the highway. Entry-level pay isn't great, he says. But he expects to earn more as he gains experience and, with time, land a job as a local driver. "It's like a window in a dark room to get the opportunity to gain a skill," Akbari says. "It's a good opportunity for me. I do appreciate the U.S. government, U.S. forces and especially the U.S. people for supporting us to come to the United States. We are very grateful."

Ken Olsen is a frequent contributor to The American Legion Magazine.

Actual size is 38.1 mm

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DEVOTED

At the height of the Vietnam War, a group of wives, sisters and mothers took up the fight for POWs and MIAs – and made their recovery a national priority.

BY TAYLOR BALDWIN KILAND

Ann Mills-Griffiths was at the home of her parents in Bakersfield, Calif., when she received the news. It was September 1966. A chaplain and the local high school football coach, also a Navy reservist, knocked at the family's front door in uniform. Ann, then 25, escorted them inside.

"I looked at them with dread. And they said, 'Yes, it's about Jimmy. But he's only missing.'" Only missing? Jimmy and Ann had been born 11 months apart: "We were very close."

Navy Lt. (j.g.) James Mills, a radar intercept officer, and his pilot, Navy Lt. Cdr. James Bauder, had been flying an F-4B Phantom over North Vietnam when they disappeared from radar in the dead of night. No flak, missiles or anti-aircraft artillery were in the area. No explosions were seen or heard. Search-and-rescue aircraft saw nothing. Bauder and Mills had vanished.

Thus began Ann's five-decade search for answers, a crusade initiated during the Vietnam War by many other women just like Ann: sisters, mothers, daughters and wives of missing and captive men in Southeast Asia.

This small sorority did what few women in the 1960s could. They bravely marched up to enemy headquarters on the outskirts of Paris, insisting on a seat at the diplomatic table. They defied the Pentagon, the State Department and the White House edict instructing them to keep quiet and leave diplomacy to the professionals.

Bucking tradition to fight for the men they loved, this cadre of ladies formed an organization called the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia. Armed with elbow grease, its members became accidental activists during one of the most tumultuous times in U.S. history. And in October 1969, they secured a meeting with the North Vietnamese at a small house just outside Paris. Invited for afternoon tea, the five women found themselves staring down the enemy.

As they tried to still their shaking teacups, a stone-faced North Vietnamese diplomat stood up, pulling from his pocket a folded *New York Times* article emblazoned with a photo of POW wife Sybil Stockdale. Pushing it in her face, he said, "We know all about you, Mrs. Stockdale." Sybil blinked, staring back at him. The ticking of a clock in the background mimicked her pounding heart.

Ann Mills-Griffiths, chairman of the board of directors of the National League of POW/MIA Families, appears on the Legion's Tango Alpha Lima podcast: ***legion.org/tangoalphalima***

LCDR JAMES BEENE 10-5-66
RICHARD STRATTON 1-5-67
CAPT. PERRY JEFFERSON 4-3-68
MAJ. JOSEPH BORS 4-28-68
LCDR JAMES BEENE 10-5-66
SPEC. 5 ALLAN KENT 11-4-69
LCDR RICHARD STRATTON 1-5-67

Alice Stratton and other wives of American POWs made the prisoners' plight publicly known. Her husband, Navy pilot Richard Stratton, survived years of torture until his release in 1973.
Courtesy Stratton family

Leering at her, he asked, "Does it not seem strange to you that for so many months the government was not concerned and talking about the prisoners and missing? And then the government started talking about them and women started coming to Paris. Your government is using wives and families to draw attention away from the crimes and aggressions they are committing."

Sybil could almost feel the blood congealing in her veins. The diplomat continued. "We know you are the founder of this movement in your country, and we want to tell you we think you should direct your questions to your own government."

This was what the U.S. government had been warning the wives for years: talking in public might hurt their husbands and hamper the government's ability to negotiate their release.

Composing herself, Sybil ticked off a list of government offices she and other wives had visited on Capitol Hill and elsewhere. Beseeching them for information on the whereabouts and welfare of their men, they handed over a thick stack of letters – some 700 – from 500 families of missing and captive men, and requested delivery.

President Richard Nixon meets with POW and MIA wives Carole Hanson, Louise Mulligan, Sybil Stockdale, Andrea Rander and Pat Mearns (from left) in Washington on Dec. 12, 1969.

Courtesy Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum

The North Vietnamese diplomat reluctantly took the bundle but made no guarantees.

He then questioned why the women claimed they were receiving so little news from their men. "I believe that letters from your husbands are being confiscated by the Pentagon or the State Department."

With only a verbal promise from the North Vietnamese and no real expectation it would be fulfilled, letdown settled in following the two-hour meeting. Were they wives or widows? Perhaps it was the gloomy weather in Paris, or the pressure had taken its toll. The growing din of anti-war sentiment – from the media, from fellow Americans – was drowning out the women's voices. Why wouldn't the Nixon administration, the State Department and the most powerful military in the world do more to secure better treatment for the men and get them released?

Yet this strange tea party signaled a shift in the attention given to these women, both in the United States and overseas. Unlike the previous four years during which they suffered in silence and obscurity, by 1969 they were receiving national and international media attention. And the U.S. government and its leaders took note. Between 1969 and 1973, when the Paris Peace Accords were signed, the members of the National League of Families traveled around the world and to the United Nations, pounding the pavement and their fists in the halls of Congress, the State Department, the Pentagon and the Oval Office. They did what military family members had never before done: they became the face of international diplomacy.

Domestically, they rallied a nation behind their cause with the wildly popular POW/MIA bracelets and the iconic black-and-white flag that now flies at the White House, the Capitol and every U.S. post office.

Amid the din and confusion of the Vietnam War, the anti-war movement, civil rights marches and the Watergate scandal, these women unintentionally made the POWs and MIAs so valuable that getting them home became the only victory left for our nation. Bringing home a small group of men who represented a fraction of the 58,000 war casualties became the focus of the peace negotiations in Paris.

Compared to previous wars, the number of missing in action from the Vietnam War is relatively small: **1,579**. The United States is still missing **72,208** from World War II, **7,496** from the Korean War, **126** from the Cold War and **5** from the Gulf wars.

Source: DPAA, July 13, 2023

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LEFT: Ann Mills-Griffiths touches the casket of her brother, Navy Cmdr. James Mills, in 2019. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kristen Duus

RIGHT: Mills, left, and pilot Mike Hanley pose with their F4-B Phantom fighter jet during their first carrier cruise. Courtesy Ann Mills-Griffiths

And at the war's end, these women pressured the Pentagon to create a permanent government agency whose sole task was to resolve the still-lingering issue of missing men from the Vietnam War. Established in 1973, the Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC) went through several name changes before becoming the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), which today has an annual budget of $130 million and a staff of 700.

Ann Mills-Griffiths took the reins of the National League of Families in 1977 and has served as a loud voice for those still missing from the Vietnam War. Not knowing what happened to her older brother for five decades was her motivation. Uncertainty is so much worse than death; it is a lifetime sentence. Yet she was also realistic: "I knew the possibility of finding his remains was remote," she says. Until 2018, when she received a call from DPAA on a hot day in August. They called that morning, asking to see her in person. "I didn't think anything of it because I talk to them all the time."

This time, they had news for her. They had retrieved a few tiny bone fragments from the shallow, muddy waters off the coast of the fishing village of Quynh Phuong, north of Vinh. Using DNA samples she had given DPAA, they confirmed that the osseous material was her brother's.

Staring at the officials, Ann admitted, "I never expected to get this news."

Between 1993 and 2003, the case of Bauder and Mills was investigated 15 times. Then, in 2006 in the shallows of the South China Sea, a fisherman's net snagged on something solid. Squinting over the side of his sampan, the old man saw a large piece of metal wedged in the muck. The scrap might be worth something if he could get it ashore. What he pulled out of the water was a large canopy frame of a plane.

DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY (DPAA)

With an annual budget of $130 million and a mission "to provide the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel," DPAA is a government agency that has its origins with the Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC). Established in January 1973 – just as America's combat operations ended – JCRC was formed under pressure from families to carry out field search, excavation, recovery and repatriation of some 2,500 missing in Southeast Asia. The case records used by JCRC were inherited from the Joint Personnel Recovery Center (JPRC), a wartime operational unit tasked with attempting to rescue American POWs. To learn more about DPAA and its ongoing work, visit **www.dpaa.mil**.

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Five underwater investigations uncovered the rest of the wreckage. After that, DPAA sent divers four separate times looking for remains. They found some of Bauder, but none of Jimmy.

"When Bauder's remains were recovered in 2017, I knew my brother was there," Ann said. "I knew he had died and where." But DPAA did not give up. Driven in part by the movement spawned by the League to leave no one behind and account for those missing, DPAA insisted on a final dive. "This is the last time," Ann insisted. "I don't want any more resources spent on my brother's case."

Tasked with the mission to find and repatriate all missing men, DPAA vows to stay the course until its mission is complete. On their 20th search, a diver emerged from the murky waters with buckets of sediment. Working from a nearby barge, forensic archeologists poured the muddy silt through a sieve, hoping it would catch what had been hiding in this watery grave for half a century. And it did. One of the specialists held up a tiny piece of osseous material. It was a rib bone belonging to Jimmy.

Ann's brother was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery in 2019. But she continues to head the National League of Families, 45 years after taking the helm, because it was never just about her brother.

Before Jimmy disappeared, and long before there was DPAA, there was the U.S. Graves Registration Service, established in 1917. This unit was responsible for identifying remains after the Great War and burying them, mostly using dog tags and the accounts of fellow soldiers.

Those who were missing in war, though, were left missing – until the Vietnam War, when a small group of women changed all that and made the fate of the missing a national priority.

This same group of women also fundamentally altered how the United States considers prisoners of war, who now have national value. Consequently, the nation fights its wars in ways to minimize the potential of capture by the enemy. It was no accident that the United States ended its longest conflict in 2021, in Afghanistan, without a single POW or MIA. The nation can still tolerate those killed in action, but not POWs nor MIAs.

Likewise, this policy shift has also influenced other countries. The families of missing and captive servicemembers in Kuwait, Israel and Australia have all pressured their governments to follow America's lead and "leave no man behind." And Vietnamese families, having witnessed the substantial media coverage given to missing U.S. troops, have demanded their government do the same for their wartime missing.

There are 1,579 husbands, fathers, sons and brothers still missing from the Vietnam War. Their wives, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, daughters, sons and now grandchildren continue to hold the United States and foreign governments accountable for determining the fate of each one. While the mission stipulates the United States will make every conceivable effort to leave no servicemember behind, the reality differs. The total number of missing Americans will never be zero. The job will never be finished.

Yet the endeavor is noble, uniquely and quintessentially American, and the return of long-lost servicemembers always celebrated. These exhaustive efforts to find just one missing soldier, sailor, airman or Marine are just part of the work DPAA continues to do: combing the globe searching for remains of our missing from all wars. It is the enduring legacy of a promise made to a handful of military wives 50 years ago: "Leave No Man Behind."

Taylor Baldwin Kiland is the co-author of three books about American POWs, including "Unwavering: The Wives Who Fought to Ensure No Man is Left Behind" (Knox Press), from which this article is adapted. She is a Navy veteran and member of American Legion Post 10 in Barre, Vt.

At 5 p.m. Sept. 30, Taylor Baldwin Kiland will visit American Legion Post 24 in Alexandria, Va., to talk about her latest book, "Unwavering: The Wives Who Fought to Ensure No Man is Left Behind."

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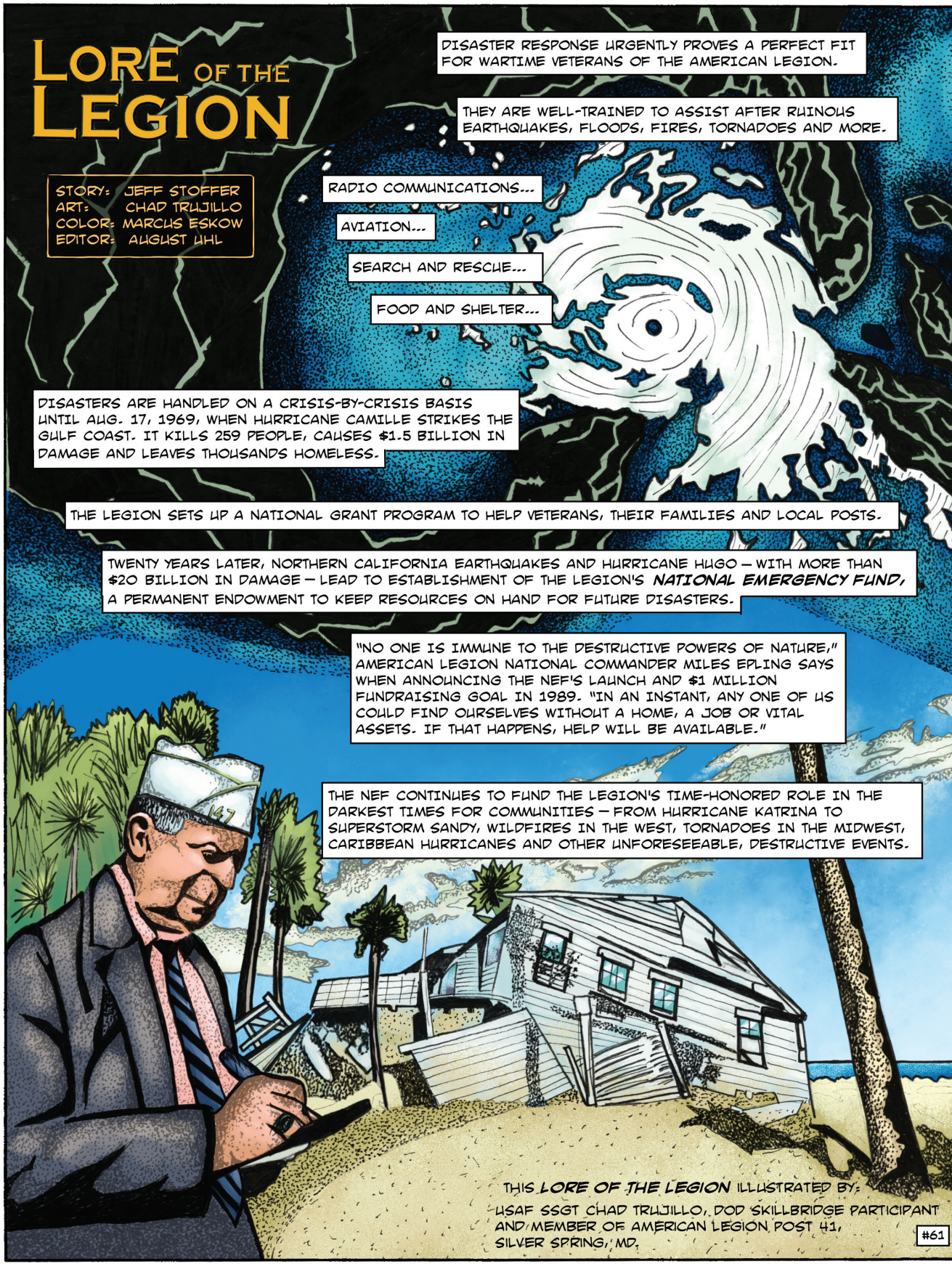
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DISASTERS ARE HANDLED ON A CRISIS-BY-CRISIS BASIS UNTIL AUG. 17, 1969, WHEN HURRICANE CAMILLE STRIKES THE GULF COAST. IT KILLS 259 PEOPLE, CAUSES $1.5 BILLION IN DAMAGE AND LEAVES THOUSANDS HOMELESS.
THE LEGION SETS UP A NATIONAL GRANT PROGRAM TO HELP VETERANS, THEIR FAMILIES AND LOCAL POSTS.
TWENTY YEARS LATER, NORTHERN CALIFORNIA EARTHQUAKES AND HURRICANE HUGO — WITH MORE THAN $20 BILLION IN DAMAGE — LEAD TO ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LEGION'S NATIONAL EMERGENCY FUND, A PERMANENT ENDOWMENT TO KEEP RESOURCES ON HAND FOR FUTURE DISASTERS.
"NO ONE IS IMMUNE TO THE DESTRUCTIVE POWERS OF NATURE," AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL COMMANDER MILES EPLING SAYS WHEN ANNOUNCING THE NEF'S LAUNCH AND $1 MILLION FUNDRAISING GOAL IN 1989. "IN AN INSTANT, ANY ONE OF US COULD FIND OURSELVES WITHOUT A HOME, A JOB OR VITAL ASSETS. IF THAT HAPPENS, HELP WILL BE AVAILABLE."
THE NEF CONTINUES TO FUND THE LEGION'S TIME-HONORED ROLE IN THE DARKEST TIMES FOR COMMUNITIES — FROM HURRICANE KATRINA TO SUPERSTORM SANDY, WILDFIRES IN THE WEST, TORNADOES IN THE MIDWEST, CARIBBEAN HURRICANES AND OTHER UNFORESEEABLE, DESTRUCTIVE EVENTS.
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THIS LORE OF THE LEGION ILLUSTRATED BY:
USAF SSGT CHAD TRUJILLO, DOD SKILLBRIDGE PARTICIPANT AND MEMBER OF AMERICAN LEGION POST 41, SILVER SPRING, MD.
#61

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Remembrance Bowl, a Patton legacy

Granddaughter of famous general resurrects 'the game that never happened,' sets sights on U.S. high schools.

Army units camped in the Champagne region of France were so confident that victory was at hand, they planned a football game for Christmas Day 1944.

"The 101st Airborne was in Reims," explains Michelle Strauss, who chairs Patton Legacy Sports, which honors the athleticism, discipline and leadership of Gen. George S. Patton, who led U.S. forces across France and Belgium in the final year of World War II. "They thought it was the end of the war, so they created a celebratory American football game called the Champagne Bowl (Reims is a center of champagne production). It was the Screaming Eagles paratroopers and the Skytrain pilots set to play each other. They held practices. They created programs. Then the Battle of the Bulge broke out, and they abandoned the game and went back to war. It became known as the game that never happened."

Nearly 80 years after the original contest was suspended, the Remembrance Bowl was played in France in 2018, where it has continued since, except in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID. This year, soldiers of the 101st Airborne squared off against their counterparts from the 82nd at Chef-du-Pont during a week of D-Day observances.

Patton Legacy Sports is now aiming to expand the idea, bringing in the Patton Foundation, building The Remembrance Project, to U.S. high schools, starting Sept. 23 at Locust Valley High School in New York, in collaboration with Operation Democracy. Other high schools are looking at holding their own sporting events to honor military service, academics and the discipline necessary to compete in athletics.

The famed general's granddaughter, Helen Patton, learned about the unplayed game of 1944 about five years ago when she discovered in a museum one of the remaining, yellowed programs. She had recently launched the sports initiative, which has two key lanes: athletics and academics. A revival of the game seemed a perfect fit to honor the legacy of Patton, who competed in the modern pentathlon at the Stockholm Olympic Games of 1912 and was an accomplished fencer and polo player.

The remembrance aspect of the game, this year won by the 101st Airborne, is for the U.S. soldiers who instead of playing football in December 1944 went off to fight the Germans back toward Berlin in one of the coldest, deadliest winters on record. "Who knows how many of those guys made it home?" Helen asks. "I thought it would be a good idea to play the game that never happened at an event where people come from all over the world to honor and remember. It's a new way to commemorate. It's a way to turn the page of history. We can do this in their stead."

Among those who attended the June 5 game was American Legion National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola, who received a game jersey signed by all the players, including commanding generals of both divisions.

Strauss says she has spoken with military recruiters and officers, who love the idea of spreading The Remembrance Project across the country. "We had a conversation, and the room lit up," Strauss says. "Within 48 hours, I heard from 36 high schools .... It spread across the recruiter phone lines."

American Legion posts nationwide are invited to get involved with Remembrance Project events and curriculum. Read more at **pattonlegacysports.org**.

– Jeff Stoffer

Carolyn Halmon comes home

Cremains of 9/11 Pentagon victim returned to family at Post 8 in D.C.

On the morning of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Matthew Paul was working in a building across the street from the World Trade Center. A 20-year member of Sons of The American Legion Squadron 13 in Bennington, Vt., he vividly remembers the destruction and the loss of life. And those memories wouldn't let Paul rest until he'd returned to her family the cremains of Carolyn Halmon, killed that day at the Pentagon.

Vietnam War veteran Herman Halmon receives an urn containing his wife's cremains from Lee Nantz and Sons of The American Legion member Matthew Paul. Photo by Melvin Brown

At a private ceremony at Kenneth H. Nash American Legion Post 8 in Washington, D.C., on June 8, Paul gave Vietnam War combat veteran Herman Halmon an urn containing his wife's cremains. The couple had been married nearly 30 years when Carolyn was killed in the attack on the Pentagon, where she worked as a budget analyst in the Office of the Secretary of the Army.

Paul, who lives in Fairfield, Conn., knew what he needed to do when he first took possession of Carolyn's urn, driven by what he witnessed in Manhattan nearly 22 years ago. "I saw the west side of the building blow out with fire," he says. "I watched a lot of people jump, and those families never saw those people again. I just knew I needed to make my best effort to return that urn."

Paul came into possession of the urn through Lee Nantz, who was operating a scrap metal business and found the urn about four years ago. Unable to locate the Halmon family, he reached out to Paul.

"We wanted to attempt as best we could to try to get it to the right people who could at least put it where it should be," Nantz says. "We kept running into a brick wall until we thought of Matt. Knowing that he loves The American Legion, (we thought) that would maybe be a way this could get to the right people. And daggone it, it worked."

Paul, too, struggled to locate Carolyn's surviving family. But after sharing the urn's story on a 9/11 memorial page on Instagram, he was contacted by someone who had worked at Dover Air Force Base and helped process the names of victims of the Pentagon attack. The employee said the Halmon family attended 9/11 memorial services at the Pentagon every year, and Paul was able to reach out to Herman through a letter. He received a phone call within a week.

Herman and his family had already received Carolyn's cremains and held a funeral and interment in fall 2001. A second set of cremains was found later and processed at Dover, but was stolen during a storage facility break-in. The thieves attempted to sell the urn to Nantz, who kept it in an attempt to return to the family.

Herman was shocked to learn the stolen cremains had been located. "I called my daughter and she said, 'Are you sure?' It's breathtaking. It was like I had a second closure."

Paul worked with The American Legion's Washington office and the Department of the District of Columbia to arrange a meeting with Herman to return the urn to him at Post 8.

"When I heard that it went through so many hands and so many people trying to find the home where it belongs, I said, 'We need to be a part of this,'" Post 8 Commander David Carmichael says. "Finally the mission has been accomplished."

In addition to Paul and members of Post 8, American Legion national staff attended the event, as did Nantz and his wife.

Herman says he'll never forget Paul's resolve to return the urn. "I call him the bounty hunter .... This guy will be close to my heart until I die. My family's all going to know about this man."

Paul is happy to share the credit. "I'm in this role virtually by the hand of God," he said. "All these other people stepped up; they heard the story and were moved, and they did whatever they could to make this happen. And Carolyn is now home."

– Steve B. Brooks

BERGMANN & MOORE:
CAMP LEJEUNE JUSTICE ACT

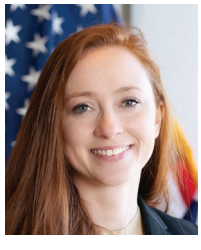
Common questions, answers about CLJA

Since the passage of the PACT Act in August 2022, Liz Hartman, Bergmann & Moore's spokesperson to The American Legion, has traveled the country speaking at posts to ensure that Legionnaires and their families are educated on the truth about Camp Lejeune's toxic water litigation, known as the CLJA. Unfortunately, inaccurate and often misleading advertising is causing confusion among Legionnaires who are afraid to file claims related to their toxic water exposure at Camp Lejeune.

Here are some frequently asked questions and their corresponding answers:

Attorney fees – How much is too much?
Congress has been unable to pass a law that limits attorney fees and costs. Most firms are charging fees (ranging from 25% to 50%) plus costs, which are not known until the end of the litigation and can be in the tens of thousands of dollars. Bergmann & Moore has capped its fees and costs to 33.33%. This means that regardless of medical development costs associated with the case, the veteran/claimant will never receive less than 66.67% of any court award.

What types of claims qualify under the CLJA?
The short answer: Any condition. Although many firms focus only on the presumptive conditions recognized by the law, there are many conditions related to toxic water exposure that have been conclusively proven by medical evidence. We encourage any veteran or their family member who served/lived at Camp Lejeune between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 31, 1987, to reach out for help in filing for any condition they think may be related to toxic water exposure.



If you have questions about CLJA, call Liz Hartman at ***(252) 497-7255****. If you're interested in filing a CLJA claim, you can speak to someone personally by calling* ***(800) 898-9450****, or fill out the form at* ***camplejeunelitigationteam.com/al****.*

DoD destroys last chemical weapons in arsenal

Army

The United States has destroyed the last of what was once a massive chemical-weapons stockpile.

As AP reports, workers at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky destroyed rockets filled with GB nerve agent (sarin), "completing a decades-long campaign to eliminate a stockpile that by the end of the Cold War totaled more than 30,000 tons."

AP reports that under the international Chemical Weapons Convention, the United States faced a Sept. 30 deadline to eliminate its remaining chemical-weapons stocks.

MY GI BILL VETERANS & EDUCATION BY VALERIE HEFFNER

Eligibility period for 'Forever GI Bill'

Q: *I was discharged from the Army in 2012 and have decided to begin college. I enrolled for the fall semester and have decided to pursue a social work degree. After applying for my Chapter 33 Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, VA sent me a letter stating that I am eligible for 36 months of benefits at 100%. However, the letter also stated that I have 15 years from the time I was discharged to use my benefits. Since I just applied now, why do I have only 15 years from the time I was discharged? I assumed I would qualify for the Forever GI Bill.*

A: The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act (nicknamed the Forever GI Bill), passed in 2017, made changes to post-9/11 benefits. One important change is removal of a delimiting date; a veteran's benefits do not expire. To qualify, you must have left the military on or after Jan. 1, 2013. If you left prior to that date, the delimiting date is 15 years from your discharge date. You have until 2027 – or 36 months of full-time benefits – to complete your program.

Valerie Heffner is a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Apache Junction, Ariz. ***askvalerie@legion.org***

ON POINT THE AMERICAN LEGION IN WASHINGTON

H.R. 358 – CAREGIVER OUTREACH AND PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT ACT

"Caregivers, whilst navigating the mental toll of their duties, encounter their own struggles and constraints. They are eligible for limited support from VA and, after this aid has been utilized, are often left in a state of psychological strain."

Written testimony submitted June 21 to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs' Subcommittee on Health, lending American Legion support for the COPE Act

American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division Director Tiffany Ellett presented oral and written testimony to lawmakers in June on a variety of pending bills, including support for one that would address the mental health hardships faced by those who care for disabled veterans.

The VA Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers currently serves the needs of veterans receiving caregiver support, but "often leaves those providing care – the caregivers themselves – wrestling with their own mental and physical hardships while they maintain a strong front for the veterans they're caring for," according to the Legion's written testimony.

The COPE Act aims to enhance VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers by bolstering grants to organizations that support caregivers, ensuring they have access to mental health resources. It also stipulates that VA must actively engage with caregivers, providing information about available resources and strategizing to improve care for underserved populations. The legislation further calls for VA to work with the Government Accountability Office to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the caregiver program, measuring its impact on disabled veterans and their caregivers.

5.5 million

Approximate number of caregivers in the United States, about 1.1 million of whom are caring for loved ones who served in the U.S. Armed Forces after 9/11

6.6, 9.6

Average days per week and hours per day, respectively, those enrolled in the VA Program of General Caregiver Support Services spent providing care to veterans, according to a 2016-2018 RAND survey

Resolved ...

The American Legion National Executive Committee passed Resolution 24: Caregiver Program, advanced by the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission in May 2017, to establish a program in the organization that would address the needs of military and veteran caregivers "by assisting with, but not limited to, employment/vocational referral, federal and state education assistance, post-9/11 caregiver benefit support, veteran-directed care, partner support with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and various caregiver support organizations, assistance with death gratuity (benefit) and terminal illness."

FOCUS ON FINANCES BY J.J. MONTANARO

Top five tips for sticking to your financial goals

What do you want to achieve? I'm surprised how often people can't articulate that concept. Sometimes, even if they can, their goals are not driving their actions and behaviors. Ideally, your goals are the engine that keeps you making smart financial decisions. When faced with an easy out, they motivate you to do the right thing.

Follow these five tips to make your financial goals work for you:

Be specific with amounts and time frames. Too often, the goals I hear are vague aspirations. Follow the old SMART acronym (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timebound) to set goals that drive you in the right direction.

Write them down. We still have a note-card box full of recipes dating to the beginning of our marriage. Just looking at them stirs memories of specific meals and celebrations. My point? The written word is powerful. When it comes to goals, studies show that if you take time to write them down, you're more likely to make them happen.

Let your goals paint a picture. While the written word is critical, visualizing what you are writing – the vivid details and associated emotions – is critical. Whether it's a Caribbean vacation or living debt-free that fires you up, a detailed mental picture can power you through to the finish line.

Keep them front and center. Make your phone screensaver an image of your next vacation. Write an inspirational Post-it note to yourself and stick it in your wallet or mirror. Tape a picture of your next car to your dashboard. These are just a few examples of ways to keep your goals top-of-mind. You may have some cool ideas of your own.

Set waypoints. I encourage folks to have short-, medium- and long-term goals. Regardless of what you're working toward, it makes sense to set check-ins along the way. It could be as straightforward as breaking down your goal of paying off all your credit-card debt into smaller chunks. This approach will give you reason to celebrate your small successes on the way to your final destination.

Get going with your financial goals today, and make them stick.

J.J. Montanaro is a certified financial planner with USAA, The American Legion's preferred provider of financial services. ***legion.org/usaa***

Digging in

Ukrainians in every region of the country – even the predominantly ethnic Russian regions in eastern and southern Ukraine – oppose any land-for-peace concessions with Russia to hasten the war's end.

10% Ukrainians who believe Ukraine should give up territory to achieve peace

84% Ukrainians who are against territorial concessions

75% Ukrainians in eastern Ukraine who are against territorial concessions

86% Ukrainians in southern Ukraine who are against territorial concessions

Sources: Yahoo News, Kyiv International Institute of Sociology

Operation Brain Storm

Envato

China's military is developing weapons "to disrupt brain functions and influence government leaders or entire populations," *The Washington Times* reports, citing U.S. and Singaporean intelligence analysts. "The weapons can be used to directly attack or control brains using microwave or other directed-energy weapons in handheld guns or larger weapons firing electromagnetic beams," the paper details.

Labeled "neurostrike" weapons, these sorts of weapons systems are engineered literally to target the brains of military personnel using non-kinetic technology. "The goal is to impair thinking, reduce situational awareness, inflict long-term neurological damage and cloud normal cognitive functions," the *Times* explains.

Legion honors service academy graduates

This spring, The American Legion's national vice commanders attended service academy graduations to present the Legion's annual awards to outstanding students in various subjects.

Ens. Dylan Carter, Miami
Carter received the American Legion award for the highest marks in English, history and government at the Naval Academy. National Vice Commander Glenn Wahus presented the award.

Ens. Morgan Fortin, Albuquerque, N.M.
Fortin received the American Legion award for national security at the Merchant Marine Academy. National Vice Commander Paul Kennedy presented the award.

2nd Lt. Malina Hatton, San Jose, Calif.
Hatton received the American Legion award for the highest standing in chemistry at the Military Academy. National Vice Commander Patricia Harris presented the award.

Ens. Michelle Kwafo, Ewing, N.J.
Kwafo received the American Legion award for athletics at the Coast Guard Academy. National Vice Commander Kenneth Hylton presented the award.

2nd Lt. James M. Landy, Washington, D.C.
Landy received the American Legion award for the highest proficiency in all academic subjects at the Air Force Academy. National Vice Commander Douglas Uhrig presented the award.

Envato

Five reasons to get life insurance

When you pass away, insurance death benefits could provide important resources to your family, including:

Final expenses and funeral costs Medical expenses incurred in the last weeks of life frequently range from $5,000 to $10,000. Memorial-service preparation and costs can also easily exceed $10,000, often pushing total final expenses to more than $20,000.

Pay debts and mortgages Payment of debts or a mortgage is a one-time expense. Depending on the amount of your mortgage, this could cost anywhere from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Living expenses for spouse The largest amount of insurance is typically purchased to provide both economic security and an investment that will add to the spouse's other annual income. A reasonable method is to estimate a 5% return on the investment. For example, if a spouse needed another $25,000 of income over and above the amount paid by retirement funds, Social Security and other earnings, insurance equal to $500,000 invested at 5% would produce this amount.

Inheritance for children Permanent insurance is frequently used as a way to provide an inheritance for children. Many parents who make substantial gifts to charity plan to use life insurance as a means of providing additional inheritance for children or other family members.

Estate taxes If your estate is large, there may be a substantial payment of federal or state estate tax. If you own a family business or other assets intended to be transferred to family, your estate could be subject to tax. Life insurance can be an excellent method for payment of estate tax. For larger estates the insurance is usually owned by an irrevocable life-insurance trust so the insurance itself is not subject to estate tax.

For questions about planned gifts, contact the Legion's Office of Charitable Giving at **(317) 630-1225**, **plannedgiving@legion.org** or **legion.giftlegacy.com**.

How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to ***The American Legion Magazine,* Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206,** e-mail **reunions@legion.org** or submit information online at **legion.org/reunions**.

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are free.

Notices will remain online until the final day of the reunion. Upon submission, allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. **Due to the large number of reunions, *The American Legion Magazine* will publish a group's listing twice a year.**

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. **We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim.** Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, phone number and e-mail address. Send notices to ***The American Legion Magazine,* Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206** or e-mail **reunions@legion.org**.

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are free.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life memberships by their posts. **This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership.**

Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to ***The American Legion Magazine*, Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**.

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your American Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to ***The American Legion Magazine*, Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**. Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

AIR FORCE / ARMY AIR FORCES

35th Security Police (Phang Rang, Vietnam), Heavy Wpns Sect, Gettysburg, PA, 9/12-14, John Graham, (814) 943-1781; **93rd Bomb Grp (WWII),** Dallas/Fort Worth, TX, 11/9-13, John Marx, (412) 327-1909, 109clearview@gmail.com; **RAF Upper Heyford (1950-1993), All Units/Ranks & Families,** Rapid City, SD, 9/19-24, Jim Seymour, (845) 454-6641, seymour116@msn.com; **RED HORSE and Prime BEEF Assn,** Fort Walton Beach, FL, 10/23-27, Richard Aldinger, (407) 399-8937, famdinger@aol.com

ARMY

1st Cav 2/5th Charlie Co, Pigeon Forge, TN, 9/26-28, Bob Moore, (574) 361-2040, sqcdg@aol.com; **44th Eng Bn Assn,** Huntsville, AL 9/13-16, Rex Hurd, (816) 752-8302, r_and_d100@hotmail.com; **65th Cbt Engineers,** Fort Knox, KY, 10/16-20, Francis "Fran" Manning, (413) 896-1199, pmann57@aol.com **138th Sig Bn,** Chesterfield, IN, 10/14, Tim Bennett, (765) 606-8818; **361st MP Co (Guard),** Sierra Vista, AZ, 2/2-3, Ken DePaola, (419) 202-2570, kennyjoede@yahoo.com; **709th MP Bn,** Louisville, KY, 10/12-15, Sam Hargadine, (573) 864-4431, shargadine@gmail.com; **ASA 8th RRFS,** Nashville, TN, 9/18-22, George Schmidt, (803) 507-7513, georgeboy48@yahoo.com

JOINT

Thailand Laos Cambodia (TLC) Brotherhood - All Southeast Asia Vets, St. Paul, MN, 9/14-16, George Shenberger, (717) 424-3633, sanber54@aol.com; **USARSUPTHAI Assn,** Branson, MO, 6/27-30, Joseph Wilson Jr., (719) 310-3558, jjwilsonjr@yahoo.com

MARINES

3rd Mar Div CAP/CAG Units (Vietnam, 1965-1972), Jacksonville, FL, 11/8-13, Eric Webb, (630) 310-0013, bulldog_8762@yahoo.com; **ANGLICO Assn,** West Palm Beach, FL, 11/2-5, Joe Luque, (661) 725-3415, jlluque47@gmail.com; **Force Logistics Cmd FLSG-A & FLSG-B,** Branson, MO, 9/18-22, John O'Conner, (585) 367-2405; **G 2/7 (Vietnam, 1965-1970),** Beaufort, SC, 9/20-24, Dave Kling, (267) 718-0419, dkling1969@yahoo.com; **Kilo 3/7 (Vietnam) (All Eras),** Springfield, MO, 10/5-9, Bill Gerke, (631) 433-8575, msggerke@aol.com

NAVY

***Bang* SS 385,** Providence, RI, 10/2-5, Paul Schramm, (269) 345-0859, inkazoo@hotmail.com; ***Bausell* DD 845,** Dayton, OH, 9/20-26,

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Randy Holton, (614) 332-4540, bausell2023@yahoo.com; ***Billfish* SSN 676,** Myrtle Beach, SC, 10/9-12, John Martin, (301) 689-5070, jmmartin622@yahoo.com; ***Canopus* AS 34,** Chantilly, VA, 10/2-6, Carl Rennerfeldt, (402) 533-3271, cmrenner@abbnebraska.com; ***John King* DDG 3,** Norfolk, VA, 9/18-22, Mathew Cummings, (917) 685-6804, mrgilholey@msn.com; ***La Salle* AGF/LPD 3,** Charleston, SC, 10/22-27, Michael Batz, (314) 805-9067, retlifer@yahoo.com; ***Litchfield County* LST 901,** Louisville, KY, 10/2-5, Don Lerche, (309) 530-8710, donlerche@yahoo.com; ***Sea Cat* SS 399**, Springfield, IL, 9/11-13, Edwin Hymer, (515) 981-3006, ednmeg@mchsi.com; ***Sphinx* ARL 24,** Branson, MO, 9/11-15, Dennis Klein, (215) 527-8176, dekdek@aol.com; ***Wainwright* DLG/CG 28,** Charleston, SC, 11/13-17, Rodney Shafer, (269) 967-3536, rodney.c.shafer@gmail.com; ***Washtenaw County* LST 1166 Vets Assn,** Reno, NV, 10/2-6, Joseph Rosenberg, (714) 993-1209, jjrosen@pacbell.net; ***Yorktown* CVS 10,** Charleston, SC, 10/18-21, George Brubaker, (319) 788-2809, gtbru@reinbeck.net

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Post 255, CA: Gerald A. Fulk, Herchel Ownbey, Alejandro R. Rico, Raymond Rodriguez
Post 38, FL: Kevin Boyd
Post 359, FL: James Helmer Jr.
Post 383, FL: Frederick M. Hutto, Gary Pruss

IN SEARCH OF

501st Transit Co (Turley Barracks, Mannheim, Germany, Nov 1960-May 1962), Irving Owens, owensij@cox.net, jfdm60650@gmail.com

608th Ord (Fort Benning, GA, 1977-1982), Charles Dvorak, (402) 292-0526

B Co 322nd Sig Bn (Germany, 1951-1954), W. Hothan, (516) 884-8179

Flt 171 (Sampson AFB, NY, Apr 1951), George Anderson, (317) 839-3586, andyfish@gmail.com

MP Det Camp Carroll, Korea (1966-1967), Daniel Warmbrod, (731) 217-4188

***Sphinx* ARL 24 (Apr 1969-Apr 1970),** Steve, (860) 917-3653

USAC RAPAC (ACD Outfit, Seoul, Korea, 1958-1961), George Spence, (352) 258-4170, gcspence@bellsouth.net

TAPS

Gerald Goetzinger, Dept. of South Dakota. Nat'l Vice Cmdr. 1989-1990, Dept. Cmdr. 1976-1977, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Alt. Memb. 1981-1989, Nat'l Mbrshp. & Post Activ. Cmte. Vice Chmn. 2004-2014, and Nat'l Mbrshp. & Post Activ. Cmte. Memb. 1974-1989, 1990-2004 and 2014-2016.

Charles LeVeille, Dept. of New Hampshire. Dept. Cmdr. 1996-1997 and Nat'l Veterans Employment & Education Cncl. Memb. 2014-2017.

LEGION SHOPPER

IF YOU'RE A VETERAN WEARING ADULT DIAPERS TO CONTROL URINARY INCONTINENCE, YOU ARE NOT ALONE

"I can keep doing what I want to do, without having to worry about running to the bathroom or changing my clothes. It's a Godsend."
— John, Men's Liberty user
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Did you know that over 18%[1] or almost twice as many men with military service experience urinary incontinence?

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Reduces the risk of infections?	YES More than 5 million Men's Liberty units have been sold, with reduced risk of infections or skin injuries	NO High incidence of diaper rash, sores,yeast infections and dermatitis
Invisible under clothing?	YES Men's Liberty is unnoticeable — only you know it's there	NO Awkward diapers can be ill-fitting, bulky and uncomfortable
Little to no out-of-pocket cost?	YES Covered by Medicare, most Medicaid plans, many private insurance plans, workers compensation and VA/Tricare	NO Adult diapers are not covered by Medicare, costing users up to $300 a month

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[1]Vaughan CP, Johnson TM 2nd, Goode PS, Redden DT, Burgio KL, Markland AD. Military exposure and urinary incontinence among American men. J Urol. 2014 Jan; 191(1):125-9. doi: 10.1016/j.juro.2013.07.016. Epub 2013 Jul 16. PMID: 23871759.

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As I get older and remember all the people I've lost along the way, I think to myself, "Maybe a career as a tour guide wasn't for me."

A POLICE OFFICER stopped a motorist who was speeding down Main Street.

"Officer," the man began, "I can explain."

"Just be quiet," the officer snapped. "I'm going to let you cool your heels in jail until the chief gets back."

"But, officer, I just wanted to say ...."

"And I said to keep quiet! You're going to jail!"

A few hours later the officer looked in on his prisoner and said, "Lucky for you the chief's at his daughter's wedding. He'll be in a good mood when he gets back."

"Don't count on it," the driver answered. "I'm the groom."

A NURSE registering a new patient asked, "When is your birthday?"

"Aug. 22," the patient replied.

The nurse asked, "What year?"

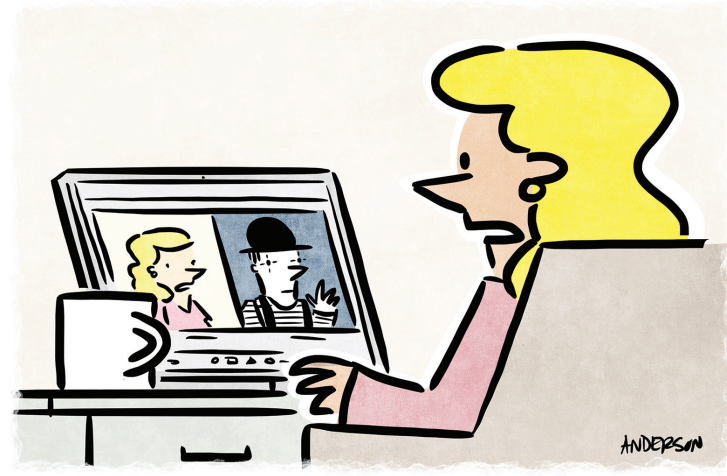
"Every year!"

AN ANGRY MAN hurried into the office of a town newspaper editor and exclaimed, "That notice of my death in your paper is a lie, and I'll fight you in public if you don't correct it and apologize in your next issue."

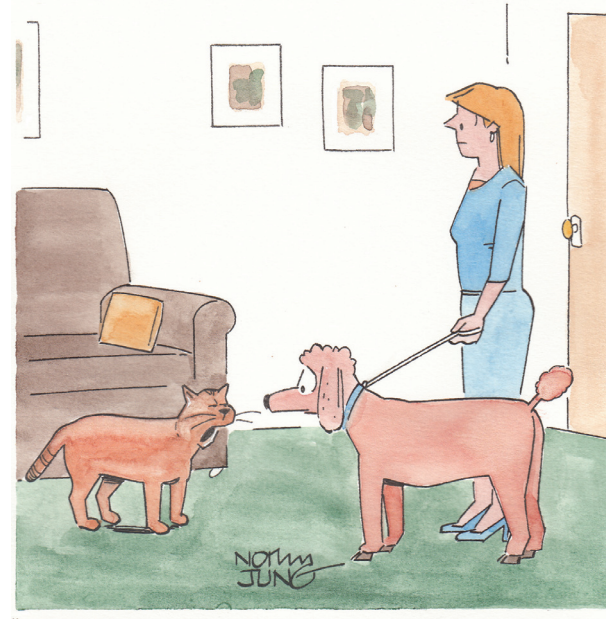
The next issue of the paper contained the following announcement: "We regret to announce that the paragraph in our last issue stating that Mr. Smith is dead is not true."

AN ARTIST traveling the countryside decided to take creative license with the landscapes he encountered, painting the towns and fields the way he wished they looked rather than as they really did. After finishing a picture of a farm, having again improved things here and there, he showed the finished product to the farmer, who peered at it and remarked, "Looks just like it. Thanks for cutting the weeds."

"MY DOCTOR told me that jogging could add years to my life. I think he was right. I feel 10 years older already." – *Milton Berle*



"Jerry? Jerry, can you hear me? I think you're on mime. Jerry?"



"I didn't flunk obedience school. I dropped out."

"After second grade, I'll be taking a gap year to find out who I really am."

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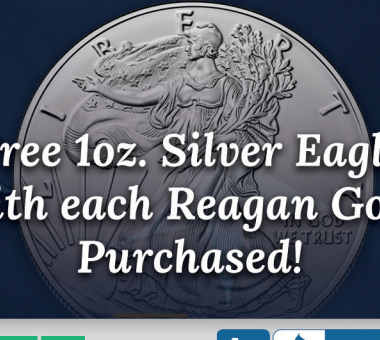

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